

Hunters, boaters and campers are reminded to remain vigilant about the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) while enjoying these outdoor activities.

According to the National Safety Council, an estimated 300 people die each year in the United States from CO poisoning.

Thousands more are sickened by the gas. Many victims are overcome in their sleep, unaware of the elevated CO levels in their homes.

This fall, Conservation Police Officers responded to two incidents on vessels that resulted in the deaths of five people. In both cases, older-model generators on board the vessels were leaking CO into the living quarters. The incidents on the Mississippi River near Grafton and on Lake Shelbyville were the first reported CO fatalities on board watercraft in Illinois in the last five years according to U.S. Coast Guard statistics.

Carbon monoxide is a silent killer.

It's colorless, odorless and tasteless, and once in your



bloodstream displaces the oxygen your body requires to properly function. Too often CO isn't detected until it's too late. Many deaths attributed to CO occur during colder months when windows and doors are closed at night leaving little or no ventilation inside.

Most often, boat cabin accidents occur because they are small enclosures.

Other areas where precautions need to be taken include small hunting cabins, campers and hunting blinds where a kerosene heater or internal combustion engine may be used for warmth.

■ **Know the Symptoms.** Often CO poisoning is confused with flu or food poisoning symptoms. Physical symptoms include shortness of breath, nausea, headache, dizziness, light-headedness, drowsiness, muscle or joint pain, numbness, chronic fatigue, seizures and chest pain. Memory impairment and changes in emotions, personality, senses and motor skills also may occur.

■ **What should you do if you suspect CO poisoning?** Immediately move the victim into fresh air and seek medical treatment (a simple blood test will confirm CO poisoning).

Open windows and doors. Turn off all combustion appliances.

■ **Conservation police offer the following tips when using generators, motors and heaters to stay warm.**

- Vent and properly maintain such devices that burn petroleum products.
- Always have a working CO detector in any enclosure where people will be.
- Always use replacement parts or components intended solely for the equipment being used. Too often people use parts such as hoses and seals not made for the heating equipment, causing the unit to leak and not work properly.
- Make sure the area you are in is ventilated at all times.

Spending time outdoors has many benefits—stress reduction, exercise, food for the table and time with family and friends, to name a few. Make the most of your time and do all you can to make that time safe.

Include checking for potential carbon monoxide sources a part of preparing for your hunting, boating and camping experience.

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